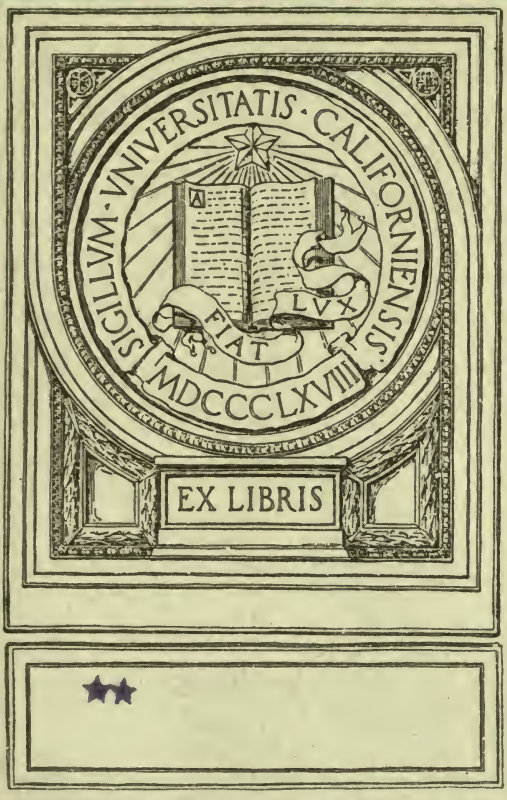
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WHY FEDERAL AID FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

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The Page-Wilson Bill (S. 3), which is now before the Senate and in the hands of the House Committee on Agriculture, distributes among the States each year a sum less than the cost of one battleship for the purpose of stimulating them to give the practical education necessary to the welfare and the happiness of our farmers and wage-workers and our future prosperity as a people. The measure has received a country-wide endorsement and support, because—

THE NEED FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IS GREAT.

Our National Prosperity is at Stake. The battles of the future between nations will be fought in the markets of the world. That nation will triumph with all that its success will mean to the happiness and welfare of its citizenship which is able to put the greatest amount of brains and skill into what it produces. Our interstate and foreign commerce are being threatened by the commercial prestige which Germany has already won as the result of a policy of training its workers, begun by the far-seeing Bismarck more than a century ago. France, England, and even far-off Japan, profiting by the success of the Fatherland, are now establishing **national** systems of vocational education.

Germany boasts that within ten years there will be no such thing as an untrained man in the empire, and talks of the passing of the untrained as a feat accomplished. Not twenty-five thousand of our twenty million wage-earners have any proper chance to be trained for their work in life. The exports of the German Empire today represent on the average a value in skill and workmanship four times as great as that of the exports from our ports. More than 65 per cent. of the volume of foreign commerce with which we have maintained a boasted balance of

trade in our favor is made up of crude, raw and semi-raw materials, such as lumber, cotton, meat, coal, oil and copper bar, to secure which we have, with crude labor, robbed our soil and the earth beneath our feet of the riches we have been foolish enough to regard as inexhaustible.

The Welfare of Our Workers is at Stake. The American workingman is today the most intelligent in the world, but he lacks training. When he has the preparation, such as Germany gives her workers, he is easily the most skilful, most productive, most resourceful. There are twenty million children in the schools of the country who will be the wage-workers of tomorrow. Every year two million of these leave the schools not only without proper vocational direction and education, but, in a large majority of cases, without the general education which our day holds to be necessary to intelligent citizenship as well as efficient workmanship. Vocational education extends general education, and prepares for the proper discharge of civic duties while fitting the youth to work well.

Since the schools have as yet assumed no further responsibility for those who go to work, the youth must get the rest of his education in an industrial organization, which no longer is able or willing to train its own workers. Large-scale production, extreme division of labor and the all-conquering march of the machine have practically driven out the apprenticeship system through which, in a simpler age, young helpers were taught the "art and the mysteries of a craft." The journeyman and artisan have given way to an army of machine workers, performing over and over one small process at one machine, turning out one small part of the finished article and knowing nothing about the business beyond their narrow and limited tasks. The age of science and invention has brought in its wake a great body of related knowledge necessary as a tool in trade to the highest success of the mechanic which the shop never did give and never will be able to give properly without the cooperation and help of the schools.

In the skilled callings the young worker no longer gets either the breadth of experience or the information which he must have in order to realize himself and must, under present conditions, remain on a permanently low level of skill. Most of those who leave the schools at the age of 14, finding the doors of the skilled industries closed to them, enter all sorts of low grade

skilled and unskilled occupations, affording little or no opportunity for better wages, promotion and a desirable life work. In the absence of a system of education following them to their tasks and giving them a way out to efficiency and happiness, the time given by these children to the factory are wasted years both to them and to society. The few adolescents who do rise to success as wage-workers, whether by accident, or rule of thumb, or sheer force of native qualities, acquire their skill and insight in ways that are wasteful to them and to the business.

As a result of all these things the American workman, as a whole, with all his native qualities, is, relatively speaking, becoming more unskilled. Low-grade skill means low wages in the face of a rising tide of prices and a reduction in the purchasing power of his wages with a corresponding lowering of that standard of living of our workers which has been the proudest feature of our national life. His welfare is bound up with the prosperity of our industries, which in turn must in the future depend for their success on a superior type of workmanship which only a democratic system of practical education can achieve.

THE NEED FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IS IMMEDIATE.

Our natural resources are being rapidly wasted and will continue to be so wasted until a system of practical training is set up which will prepare those who toil on farm and in home and shop to use the riches of soil and forest and mine intelligently. This program calls for a farmer able to use the scientific knowledge stored up in the archives of our splendid agricultural institutions as a tool in trade with which to make the soil yield more abundantly and yet transmit his acres rejuvenated to the next generation—a home maker getting the most out of the products of shop and farm, a workman who with rising intelligence and skill will reduce waste, increase production and fashion raw material into things of greater usefulness and beauty and value.

Our richer asset of human labor is being constantly wasted and will continue to be wasted until the American people make their great public school system more democratic by extending its service through vocational education to reach and meet the real needs of our neglected workers, so that all the children of all the people may be trained in all kinds of ways for all kinds

of things. Then, and not until then, can we discover and train the taste and ability of every man, give him a fair chance to realize what there is in him and reap from him his best as a worker and citizen for his own welfare and that of the Republic.

Delay will be disastrous, in dealing with the question. With a constantly increasing demand upon our industries for more and better goods, the supply of trained workers is, relatively at least, diminishing. We are already beginning to feel the inevitable economic results in a relatively low output, increased cost of production and stationary or diminishing wages as measured by their purchasing power. The product of our factories is being restricted in quantity and quality, if not actually diminished. High prices are due in part to inefficient labor and low profits to industry to the same cause. The high cost of living arises to a large extent from the excessve cost of production, and is made worse by the inability of the untrained worker to earn the highest wages. Inaction means the promotion of poverty and low standards of living and a general national backwardness in industry.

With a farming area practically stationary, a rapidly increasing population and an agricultural class whose ability to meet the demands for larger production is relatively diminishing, our national appetite has outgrown both our national larder and our national pocketbook. Population tends to press upon subsistence. The cost of the necessaries of life have arisen faster than the earning power of the consumer and has operated to reduce the actual income of the wage-worker and make the struggle for existence very hard not only to the common laborer but even to the trade worker of small means. For millions of our people life has as a result been narrowed and sombered.

There is no remedy for the high price of the food supply save a more productive agriculture. Stored away in the archives of our splendid agricultural institutions is enough scientific knowledge to employ us for the next hundred years in putting it into effect. What is needed **now** is the federal encouragement which will get all this information down into the mind and hand of the man who actually does the farming. If the era of high prices for farm commodities is with us to stay, there is no remedy save the education of a working class which is able to earn and to be rewarded by a better wage and enable us with better paid workmen to maintain ourselves in the world's market.

Delay means continued national unrest. The demand for vocational education arises largely out of unrest—out of the insistence that better things than the father had should be provided for the son, as his way out to happiness and efficiency. All over the land there exists a deep-seated feeling among those who toil that our education today is class education; that it exists chiefly for those who have the means to enjoy academic culture, but not at all for those who need vocational culture. Labor is pressing a just claim for its share of the service of the schools. It does not want what is now done to be undone, but it asks that which has been left undone in preparing the great mass of our people to fight the battle of life shall now be done.

We can almost hear the whisper of our oncoming population. By the middle of the twentieth century this government will be responsible for the welfare of 200,000,000 souls. It is the duty of society to protect, equip and conserve the next generation. The kind of agriculture now carried on in the country can not support, at least on an American standard, such a multitude. Every consideration requires that we should begin now on a large scale the task of educating a farming population to meet this grave duty—a task which we can discharge properly only by a system of agricultural education which will deal not only by extension work with the mature farmer but will also through the schools prepare the youth in the right theory and practice of farm work.

Now is the time to begin this work actively if we are to "get the right answer" to our problem. Germany, with national co-operation and aid, has thirty years the start of us in preparing workmen. Even with the help of the National Government at least the same amount of time will be required for the States to get where the Germans are today either in the success of our schools or the benefits derived in the greater efficiency with which our work will be done. While the need is acute, all the vocational training for the actual worker now being carried on in this country, while promising as an experiment, is as nothing compared with the magnitude of the task confronting us. Only five out of forty-eight States have established State systems for vocational education, and in these the schools as yet are not reaching much more than 1 per cent. of the workers who need them.

While the task confronting us is difficult and stupendous, it

can be overcome and will be overcome just in proportion as we work at it. Germany has done much, but her experience has for us only suggestion, never precedent and rule. Everywhere, by beginning now, under the stimulus of national encouragement, we will learn by our attempts and our studies, how to adapt our schemes of practical training to the needs of our workers, to the varied and complex demands of our industries, due to the peculiar sound, economic, industrial, educational and administrative conditions of each State and locality.

FEDERAL AID IS NECESSARY TO MEET THE CRISIS.

The States Cannot Do It by Themselves. Without the aid of national grants, extensive vocational education would come in time, but very slowly. After almost ten years of agitation, as has already been stated, only four out of the forty-eight States have set up complete systems of practical education, and in these the movement has as yet reached only a very few of the millions to be served. It will take the States, acting separately, a century to get where Germany is today. Every commonwealth is already heavily burdened with the task of meeting the new demands in general education which the Twentieth Century is thrusting upon the school room. Restricted to the revenue from a property tax, the States lack the means wherewith, unaided by the larger resources of the Union, they can cope with the problem successfully. They are reluctant, and probably rightly so, to tax themselves for the entire support of expensive forms of practical instruction when they see the trained men and women drifting away to other States and carrying to them rich assets in citizenship and workmanship.

Local communities all over the land are under a restricted taxing power on the one hand and, on the other, under increasing requirements, many of which have been imposed upon them by State laws. As a result, most of them are finding it very difficult to meet their financial problems. The burden lies heaviest in communities that most need agricultural and industrial education—the small country town, with its small number of inhabitants to the square mile and the low value of taxable holdings, and the industrial center where the population is increasing much faster than the valuation of property. Practical education will be costly if it is given properly. To give it otherwise is a sad waste of time and money and, in view of the issues at stake,

a natonal calamity. Cities and towns and the country places must have the aid of the State with its comparatively limited resources, and that of the Nation, else they will not attempt the task, or will be unduly burdened or do a piece of work which may result in more harm than good.

We Have Made One Big Mistake. Lacking the wider view of our condition and our needs as a people which, under the theory of the Constitution, the National Government possesses, the States must have the stimulus of federal aid and co-operation, to induce them to begin now what it will be too late to do after we have made the same mistake in the conservation of our asset of human labor which we have already made by the failure to start a half century ago the protection of our national resources.

FEDERAL AID FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IS LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL.

The national character of the idea of producing a body of better trained workers justifies national grants, for it concerns all the people and in the far-reaching results in view is of nation-wide interest and importance. It is the duty of the National Government in so far as it does not interfere with the constitutional rights of the States to promote the general welfare. The national efficiency is the sum of the efficiency of the individual citizens of all the commonwealths. The national wealth is the sum of their wealth-producing capacity. Our national prosperity is based largely on the exploitation of our national resources—a prosperity that in the very nature of things must be limited in time. The day is approaching when as a people we must depend less and less on the riches with which nature has endowed us and more upon human skill. As our resource factor falls, as it is now falling, it becomes high time for us to increase the skill factor as the human asset upon whose conservation and promotion rests our future as an agricultural and industrial power.

On the basis of our situation as a competitor in the markets of the world as a nation, we become a competitive unit against other nations as units. This makes the protection of our raw material and the advance of the skill of our producing population an international as well as a national problem and introduces a national element or factor into all the vocational education of this country. The immediate and right preparation of

farmer and home maker and mechanic becomes of vital concern to the nation as a whole, as well as to the States. If we had only a home market, with States competing with each other for its patronage, we could not defend national grants to vocational education. But with the States competing as a nation for the commerce of the world and a mobility of labor not to be found elsewhere, the aid of the Federal Government becomes not only necessary and wise but legal.

The interstate character of the problem of vocational education, due to the inter-relation of our industries and the national character of State business and industrial life, makes federal grants justifiable. Because of its extreme mobility labor, particularly that which is skilled and therefore in great demand, has taken on a national character. A man may be born in Indiana, be trained as a worker in Massachusets, and spend his days as a machinist in California. A State can not be expected to devote large sums from the public revenue to the making of good workmen for the benefit of other States. Only out of a common fund like the national treasury can the burden be equalized and adjusted so that each State may in justice be expected to meet the obligation resting upon its schools. Industries are so interrelated that every State is interested commercially in the quality of workmanship in every other State and in all States. Cotton is grown in Georgia, woven into cloth in Rhode Island, and consumed in Iowa. Iron is rolled in Pennsylvania or Alabama, made into plows in Wisconsin, and used in Oregon. The widespread distribution of many large-scale industries is such that State lines must be disregarded when we think of the places and the problems involved not only in the making, the finishing and the selling of products, but also in the education and the employment of labor. A great construction company anywhere today may not only gather its working force representing many different trades from everywhere in the Union, but may during the year in the ordinary course of business send them into a dozen States.

Although we are a group of sovereign States, every one of whose constitutional rights must be carefully safeguarded, industry, commerce and labor are so interrelated that the National Government must be the unifying agency through which the States co-operate—do team play in handling all problems such as national defense, the improvement of our rivers and harbors, the

postal service and practical education, the character of which is such that they can not be handled by the individual States. This, as I understand it, has always been the work of the National Government, for which it was established by the Constitution. The proposal that the nation undertake to help the States deal with the task of providing vocational training for twenty million workers is not in any way an attempt to infringe upon the right of the State to control its own educational system, but the application in a new field of service of a time-honored constitutional duty of helping the States, without infringing upon their sovereignty, to discharge a task whose character was such that federal assistance was necessary and the general welfare was at stake.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE STATES IS SAFEGUARDED BY THE PAGE BILL.

Proper expenditure of federal money is insured by having each of the States establish a State board for vocational education for the administration of vocational education, which may be the regular board of education or any other board of control the State may elect, whose duty it shall be to administer for the State all funds received from federal appropriations. When the general features of the system, or working plan, of this State board have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior, federal grants are placed at the disposal of the board, to use for the benefit of the kind of vocational training of which it approves as being adapted to the requirements of its workers.

More than one hundred million dollars have been distributed among the States and applied by each to a permanent school fund, to which they have made material additions, so that at the beginning of this century the total income amounted to more than ten millions. Distributed among the local communities for the purpose of adjusting and alleviating their burdens, this money has been spent by school authorities for the salaries of teachers of every kind of public school work. While most of it has gone to the support of general education, an increasing amount is being devoted to the manual and household arts, elementary agriculture and even to thoroughgoing training in vocational subjects.

More than $65,000,000 was spent last year under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture for training in agriculture and

mechanical arts, much of which, under the Morrill and Nelson acts, was used in the State Colleges of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts. These institutions are supported and controlled by the respective States, subject to a limited approval of their work by the Secretary of Agriculture, to insure the proper expenditure of the Government grants. The Page bill only proposes an extension of this help to secondary education—to schools of lower grades, fitting boys and girls and men and women who work with their hands for successful employment. If it be right and wise and just and legal to use the federal resources, and it is, to help the States train leaders, it is equally so to extend the benefit to those who do the productive work of the nation. The stimulus of national aid has been largely the moving cause in the rapid growth of our splendid State colleges, particularly those giving training for technical leadership in the vocations, and promises to be even more useful in promoting the immediate establishment of State systems of vocational education for those who toil.

The Autonomy of the State is Safeguarded. Each is free under the bill to get the kind of vocational education it needs. When national or State authorities have agreed upon broad and general standards and principles, so that the grants may not be used for work contrary to the spirit and purpose of the act, each commonwealth is entirely free to work out plans that in general promise success. The Page bill is based upon the proposition that the need for vocational education is great and imminent, that the States acting separately and without the help of the National Government will not bring it to pass in time; that in view of the expense involved and the problems to be solved, federal aid and co-operation is necessary; that there exists a more widespread public demand for immediate action by the general government than has ever supported federal grants for any other purpose; that, in view of the issues at stake and the difficulties to be encountered, the allotments of money should be made under such conditions as will prevent it from being wasted or misapplied and yet guarantee State and local, rather than national initiative, control and administration.

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